

CONDOLENCES TO ...

The friends and family of University of Montana Professor Emeritus **Bill Raoul**. He died Aug. 25 at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula of complications from diabetes. He was 73 years old. Raoul taught in the Department of Theatre and Dance for 27 years (now the School of Theatre and Dance). His areas of expertise were scenic design, set construction, costuming and film history. He designed “more shows than he could forget” at UM, and was the driving force behind many of the details in the construction of the PARTV building on campus, which was completed in 1985. He also designed numerous productions for the Montana Repertory Theatre, the professional theatre company based at UM, mastering the fine art of designing scenery that had to load in and out of a truck and tour across the country.

Raoul studied theatre at East Carolina University and the Goodman School of Theatre, and received his MFA from the University of Washington. While in Seattle he designed shows for A Contemporary Theatre and the Seattle Repertory. He was also a professor of design for California State University, Fullerton, and Citrus College. Raoul was the author of several textbooks on scenery construction and sound design.

The Florida native had a lifelong passion for classical music and amassed a collection of nearly 70,000 records and CDs, which he generously donated recently to the UM Mansfield Library. He researched, wrote and anchored several classical music programs for Montana Public Radio. He also collected books, movies, china, silverware, art, statues, and images of Nipper, the RCA Victor dog.

Upon his retirement at age 60, Bill purchased an 1874 Steinway grand piano and built a music room in his home. He then began producing classical “musicales” for his friends and colleagues. He was also known for his irreverent sense of humor and his love of cooking and entertaining. Despite the fact that he was never seen wearing anything except blue work shirts and blue jeans he was named “best dressed” by a *Missoulian* poll in the 1980s.

– From the *Missoulian*

The family and friends of MSU Billings Professor Emeritus **Sue Hart**. She died Aug. 25 in Livingston, surrounded by her family. Hart was born on April 15, 1936, in Detroit, and was raised and educated there until the family moved to White Plains, NY, in 1956. As an undergraduate, she attended Mercy College (now the University of Detroit Mercy), Good Counsel College (now the White Plains campus of Pace University), and the University of London. In 1958, she moved to Missoula to attend Montana State University (now The University of Montana) as a graduate assistant in the English Department. She received a master’s in English from that institution, and taught at the University of Idaho and Billings Catholic Central High School before joining the faculty of the English Department at Eastern Montana College of Education (now MSU Billings) in 1961.

She taught a variety of courses at MSUB, and developed five courses for the department: Montana Writers, Montana Memoirs, Adolescent Literature, Magazine Article Writing, and Women in Literature and the Arts. Following her 2013 retirement, Hart was conferred the rank of Professor Emeritus by the Montana Board of Regents, recognizing her 50 years of service to MSU Billings, her community, and her state.

She was a frequent contributor to a number of magazines and professional journals, and at one time worked for the *Billings Gazette*. She also developed a Local Access Channel Television interview program, “Montana Books and Authors,” which she hosted for over 10 years. She traveled the state making presentations for the Montana Committee for the Humanities (now Humanities Montana) Speakers Bureau.

She received a PEN Syndicated Fiction Award for her short story, “Star Pattern,” and wrote four books: *The Call to Care*, the history of St. Vincent Hospital; *Yellow-stone and Blue*, the history of the first 75 years of MSU Billings; *Montana Center on Disabilities: Focusing on Abilities*; and *Billings: Montana’s Trailhead*. She was the recipient of a Governor’s Humanities Award, a Governor’s AIDS Award, the Montana Historical Society’s Board of Trustees’ Educators Award, a WILLA Award from Women Writing the West, and three Faculty Excellence Awards from MSU Billings.

She also worked on two documentaries for Montana PBS: “Paradise and Purgatory: Hemingway at the L-T and St. Vincent Hospital,” and “Gravel in her Gut and Spit in Her Eye – The Life of Dorothy M. Johnson.” The latter was a Spur Award finalist in the Best Documentary Script category in 2006. She also worked on documentaries covering the lives of two important Montanans, Ben Steele and Elsie Fox, and worked with editor Caroline Patterson on the Montana Women Writers anthology, *A Geography of the Heart*, and the Fra Dana biography.

In 2000, she married her longtime friend Richard S. Wheeler. They enjoyed 13 years together, sharing their interests in Montana history, writing, and entertaining their many friends in Billings and Livingston.

– From the *Billings Gazette*

The family and friends of **Charles “Chuck” Johnson**. The composer of Hellgate High School’s school songs and a 40-year music educator in Montana and Washington died Sept. 12 at the age of 85. He was born June 2, 1929, in Opheim to parents who were both musicians. They encouraged his early penchant for music. He enlisted in the Navy as a musician, and after completing the Navy’s music school in Washington, DC, he was stationed in Washington and at Great Lakes

Naval Station in Illinois. He enrolled at The University of Montana (then called Montana State University) in 1953 and graduated cum laude in 1956 with a degree in music education.

His first teaching contract was at White Sulphur Springs. He returned to Missoula in 1960, where he served as teaching assistant and assistant band director at UM while getting his master’s in music education. In 1961, he went to work for the Missoula Grade School District, first as assistant band director and then grade school orchestra director. He became Hellgate High School’s first band director in 1964. He composed the school’s fight song, “Fight on You Knights,” and the alma mater song, “We are the Knights of Hellgate High”; under his leadership, the Hellgate Band performed challenging, cutting-edge symphony music of the day. He was a former president of the Montana Bandmasters Association.

He eventually became an instrumental music instructor in Renton, WA, prior to his retirement in 1998. Throughout his career, he brought in a little extra income by teaching private lessons and playing in various local jazz combos.

He was honored Aug. 13 by Gary Gillette and the Missoula City Band and retired Hellgate choral director, Dean Petersen, who performed and sang the Hellgate songs while Johnson sat in the front row. This marked his last public outing, fittingly at a performance by the band he played with for many summers.

– From the *Missoulian*

The family and friends of **Floyd V. Creekmore**. Better known as **Creeky the Clown**, he died Sept. 27 at age 98. The former Montana rancher held the record as the world’s oldest performing clown. Born July 14, 1916, in Fergus County, the former rancher and homebuilder had been performing since the 1980s. He was recognized in February 2012 in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as “the oldest clown still working” at the age of 95 years, 6 months. The International Shrine Clown Association named him Clown of the Year in 1993. “He made a lot of friends nationwide with his clowning,” fellow clown Clint Frank, of Billings, told the *Gazette*. “He was kind of the godfather of Al Bedoo clowns.” His son told the Associated Press that Creeky turned to rubber noses and orange wigs in the 1980s, after retiring from his previous life ranching and building homes. He joined the Shriners, which holds circus performances to raise money for its hospitals, and he put in thousands of hours of entertaining sick and well children, his son said. “A lot of people go clear through life and are never really passionate about something,” Dave Creekmore said. “Boy, he had the passion. He jumped into that with both feet.”

– From the Associated Press and *Billings Gazette*



Nancy Gordon

The family and friends of artist **Nancy J. Gordon**. She died Aug. 10 in Missoula. Creative expression was central to her life, as an opera singer and pianist in her youth, a potter and weaver during her child-rearing years, and finally during the past 20 years, through painting and participation in the Sandpiper Art Gallery community in Polson. Born in Greensboro, NC, her family moved to Seattle when she was 13 years old. Her early studies in theater, music and opera singing brought her to perform in many venues, including the former Green Lake Aqua Theatre in Seattle. She met and married her husband, Clarence Gordon, in Seattle, eventually moving to Missoula with her young family. As a creative, intelligent and politically engaged woman, she studied history, art and literature, and was always ready with a well-informed perspective of world events. Through her community activism, in the late 1970s she was awarded a Kellogg Foundation Leadership Grant. In later years, she focused her energies on creating beautiful watercolor and multimedia paintings, exploring expression through color and design, and ideas through participation in her beloved literary group in Polson. As a final act, the day after she passed, her family learned she’d won a blue ribbon at the Western Montana Fair for her artwork.

The family and friends of artist **James M. (Jim) Wylder**. He died Aug. 5 in Great Falls at age 86. In the *Great Falls Tribune*, columnist Richard Ecke describes Wylder as a businessman, photographer, tennis player, philanthropist, and “Renaissance man.” He retired in 1985 as president and chief executive of Great Falls Coca-Cola Bottling Co., and launched a new career as a photographer. He was proprietor of Phine Photography in downtown Great Falls, and had work published in various magazines, and featured in exhibitions at Paris Gibson Square and the C.M. Russell Museum. He had recently been helping Paris Gibson Square create a compilation DVD titled “Buon Giorno,” that melded music with images by local photographers. He and his wife, Frances Wylder, were also generous philanthropists, supporting local nonprofit groups such as Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art, the Great Falls Symphony, McLaughlin Research Institute and The University of Montana Alumni Association. “He was generous with his time and he was definitely generous with his business acumen,” Tracy Houck, executive director of the Paris Gibson Square, told the *Tribune*.

– *Great Falls Tribune*



Charles Johnson



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Preservation Alliance hosts website

Learn more about the Montana Preservation Alliance – organization committed to preserving Montana’s historic places, traditional landscapes and cultural heritage – at www.preservemontana.org.

In addition to information about the alliance, which is headquartered in Helena, the site lists upcoming meetings and links to state and national sources of preservation information.

MPA also produces a membership newsletter, holds public meetings, and helps raise public awareness of Montana’s fragile cultural heritage while promoting a broad range of historic preservation activities.

In addition, MPA offers technical assistance on preservation-related issues and conducts in-depth weekend workshops that focus on heritage tourism, downtown revitalization, local historical preservation planning and other related topics.